



LAND REFORMS AND LAND GRABS

Contemporary Conflicts in the Brazilian Land Struggle

Clifford Andrew Welch

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Land Reforms and Land Grabs: Contemporary Conflicts in the Brazilian Land Struggle

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Abstract

While land reform and land grabbing are two distinct phenomena, there has long been a dynamic relationship between them in the history of the Brazilian land struggle. As a policy aimed at “reforming” agricultural land use practices, land reform has served to facilitate land grabbing. Land grabbing, on the other hand, has motivated movements in favor of land reform. This paper explores this dynamic principally in São Paulo state in the Cold War era and the Globalization era. It uses documents, reportage, oral history, and secondary literature to examine change and continuity between events and discourses from 1961 to 2012.

About the Author

Clifford Andrew Welch earned his Ph.D. in Latin American history at Duke University in 1990. He taught Latin American history at Grand Valley State University in Michigan for 20 years before taking a position as historian of contemporary Brazil at the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) in 2009. He has been visiting professor of graduate studies at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica, the Universidade de São Paulo and the Universidade Estadual Paulista. His books and films include *Lutas camponesas no interior paulista: a memória de Irineu Luís de Moraes* (1992), *The Seed Was Planted: The São Paulo Roots of Brazil’s Rural Labor Movement* (1999), *Grass War! Peasant Struggle in Brazil* (2001), *Camponeses brasileiros* (2009) and *Jôfre Corrêa Netto, Capitão camponês (1921-2002)*.

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1 Introduction

While land reform and land grabbing are two quite different phenomena, there has long been a dynamic relationship between them. As symbols of neocolonial control, foreign-owned lands have often been the first targets of land reform projects. In the context of Latin American history, one recalls that restricting foreign purchases of farmland was a central theme of the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s. In the 1950s, Guatemala's first democratic government attempted to redistribute to peasants lands controlled by the United Fruit Company, only to be toppled by a CIA-orchestrated coup d'état. A few years later in Cuba, Fidel Castro's expropriation of U.S.-owned sugar estates marked similar concerns (Petras & LaPorte, 1971). During these same Cold War years, Brazilian communists accused *latifundiários* of being allies of United States imperialism and made them targets of "*reforma agrária radical*" (Medeiros, 2003). Thus, the terms easily came to be seen as representing opposite poles politically: resisting foreign land grabs with land reform policies.

But, as a policy aimed at "reforming" agricultural land use practices, land reform also served to facilitate the land grabbers. Examples include the Rockefeller projects in Mexico shortly after World War II, the Bolivian experience that began a few years later and the Alliance for Progress that used "land reform" as its principal weapon against the spread of radical nationalism in various countries. Policymakers and scholars developed strategies of land reform intended to break-up unproductive old estates and "liberate" their lands for the market, including foreign investors, and wrote regulations to facilitate modernization in the form of mechanization, chemical inputs and other technological innovations. Colonization was understood as agrarian reform and thousands of peasants found themselves being used as frontline troops in the conquest of new agricultural territories. Expected consequences emphasized not only productivity gains but also strengthened democratic institutions as smallholders became more firmly integrated in the political economy. The typical package of alliance land reform policies became known as the Green Revolution in the 1970s. This "revolution" saw the countryside as an essential partner to broader industrialization processes that welcomed foreign direct investment by vertically integrated multinational agribusiness in the decades to come (Burbach & Flynn, 1980; Welch, 2012). In fact, most "real" land reform policies opened doors for land grabbers and served to assist – in ways welcomed by some and condemned by others – the land and wealth concentration that continued to bedevil Latin America.

This article utilizes the contemporary rural social history of the state of São Paulo, Brazil, to examine the complex relationship between land reform and land grabbing and thereby contribute historical perspective to the recent debate of the latter process. The research involved gathering and reading historical literature as well as contemporary journalism, analysis of socioeconomic data gathered by government agencies and agribusiness organizations, evaluation of state and organizational documents and reports generally available to the public, interviews conducted by third parties and the author. Through analysis of these sources, the paper seeks to explain historical trends in foreign direct investment in Brazilian agricultural land as well as describe representations of intentions, expectations and values related to foreign participation in the sector. Particularly useful in organizing the discussion were two national congresses of groups opposing the "foreignization (*estrangeirização*)" of Brazilian land, one held in 1961 and the other in 2012. Discussion of these data and representations will be approached dynamically to examine their construction historically by protagonists and antagonists, especially large landowners and smallholders, their organizations and the state. The primary objective of this paper is to identify change and continuity in the historical relationship between concerns over land purchases by foreigners and agrarian reform initiatives in Brazil between the Cold War and Globalization eras.

In analyzing land grabbing from a historical perspective, the evaluation of cases has been oriented by the combined "wide and narrow" framework of analysis presented by Saturnino Borras, Jennifer Franco, Cristobal Kay and Max Spoor (2012). In their study of property rights in Latin America, they

opted to examine rural land concentration and capital accumulation in the region within the broad context of neoliberal globalization, while narrowly defining land grabbing based on the following three “dimensions”:

- i) significant extent of recent large-scale land acquisitions;
- ii) involvement of foreign governments in these land deals; and
- iii) negative impact of such renewed land investments on food security of the recipient country (Borras et al, 2012: 847).

But for one exception – the definition of recent – this paper also addresses its object from this broad yet focused framework.

The liberal era of bi-polar conflict was significantly different from the current period of neoliberal globalization, and yet certain continuities can be identified. The historical record also demonstrates support for analyzing large-scale land acquisitions, foreign government involvement and the problems presented for food production in São Paulo specifically and Brazil in general from the recent past (post-WWII) to the present. The terms “globalization,” “land grabbing” and “food security” were not current in Brazil in the Cold War period, but “imperialism,” “land monopoly,” “hunger,” and “food shortages” were used to speak of almost the same phenomena. In examining these similar but different debates and languages within an identical analytical framework, we believe it may be possible to gain greater understanding of current controversies, especially change and continuity in the dialectics of land grabbing and land reform.¹

2 Reforma agrária Brasileira, a qual nunca foi feita

The place to begin is perhaps at the end, the epitaph: “Brazilian agrarian reform, a policy never put in practice” (Callado, 2003). The line comes from the subtitle of an eloquent little book, originally published in 1985 by the writer Antonio Callado (1917-1997). It narrates the story of a contemporary “agrarian reform” project in the Pontal do Paranapanema region of São Paulo state, one that obviously failed to achieve “agrarian reform” status from the perspective of the author. Callado was contracted by the São Paulo State Energy Company (CESP, in its Brazilian acronym) to describe conditions in the Pontal in hopes of thereby adding stimulus to land reform initiatives in the area. But Callado found a different story. “Let it be said,” writes Callado, “that the São Paulo state government failed to implement in the Pontal any sort of agrarian reform” (2003: 75). Yes, Callado confirmed, CESP had built a relocation colony for a number of peasants its own river-damming project had forced to move, but this was not agrarian reform. Nor were other attempts by the state government to establish agrarian reform settlements legitimate in Callado’s interpretation. Why not? Because the laws of the land required the state government to buy out the landowners, and for Callado such business deals did not qualify as agrarian reform practices. Indeed, development of the area served to attract investment from Duke Energy International, a U.S. headquartered transnational corporation (TNC), which bought CESP-Paranapanema in 1999 when the state government privatized the firm.

¹Certainly we are not the first to look to the past to help understand the present in the context of the land grabbing controversy. The very name “land grabbing” appears in the first American edition of Marx’s *Capital*, vol. 1 (1908 [1867], p. 470). The third “dimension” above as presented by Borras and his colleagues reveals historical perspective when qualifying contemporary processes as “renewed” land acquisitions. Moreover, *Journal of Peasant Studies* articles stimulated by the first round of LDPI grants brought the past to bear on the present in comparing the privatization of public lands – principal target of land grabbers in some parts of the world – to the “enclosure” movement widely practiced from the 17th century in the United Kingdom (White et al, 2012; Alden Wiley, 2012). See also Araghi, 2000.

Callado's Pontal story from 1984 begs the question, what is agrarian reform in Brazil? Many are the chapbooks published in Brazil that use this query for a title (Raposo, 1965; Veiga, 1981; Scolese, 2005). Despite the debate indicated by such production, advocates of the question generally agree that agricultural policies must redistribute land tenure rights in order to qualify as agrarian reform. In this simplified response there are numerous hidden complexities. From the ground up, the first is that of the acquisition of the land that is to be redistributed. According to advocates of "radical agrarian reform," such land had to be expropriated from owners as a form of punishment for either having falsely obtained property rights or for ignoring the land's social function by not employing it well. For others, however, land acquisition had to be through appropriation, raising further questions about sources of funding. This leads to a second sub-question about who the legitimate beneficiaries should be, and the responses have been diverse: poor landless peasants, active farmers desiring to expand their agricultural land, rural wage earners currently living on the targeted property or farmworkers in general, the urban poor or perhaps anyone with an interest in becoming a farmer. Whoever it might be, another sub-question came into play: should they be required to pay for the land? For "radical agrarian reform" proponents, the answer is no; for many others, subsidized purchase is seen as a way of guaranteeing greater commitment to productivity without impeding the poor from benefiting. A third question revolves around the type and level of support beneficiaries should receive once their lots have been assigned. Still more questions and sub-questions would have to be considered to fully answer the initial question, but our discussion is limited more or less to the problem of land acquisition.

In the post-World War II history of Brazil, two significant variations in the discourse of agrarian reform can be detected in the representation of the policy as a strategy of economic development that could reduce threats either from radical political pressure or poverty. The first dates from the Cold War era, when the policy became law in Brazil for the first time only in the wake of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 (Santos, 1998). The second dates from the 1980s, when the struggle for land became resurgent in the context of Brazil's transition from twenty years of authoritarian military rule to competitive democracy. The development studies specialist Cristobal Kay (1998) calls these the pre-reform and post-counter-reform eras. In both eras, as he shows, the results were "mixed at best," with commercial farmers generally winning and peasant farmers (the supposed beneficiaries of reform) generally losing.

In both cases, international institutions shifted their policies in ways that influenced Brazilian agrarian reform initiatives. In the first wave, the 1964 Land Statute approved by the first military dictator, General Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, benefited from being a policy urged on Latin American governments by the Alliance for Progress program then promoted by the United States government (Cehelsky, 1979; Welch, 2012). In the second wave, which continues until the present, agrarian reform became part of the 1988 Brazilian constitution and received further support from the World Bank's emphasis on "combatting poverty" in the countryside, where the malady was said to be "extreme" (Pereira, 2010). High levels of poverty were increasingly depicted as threats to the stability of the neoliberal model as the Cold War period came to a close. The international context is important to underscore, as it is from this vantage point that the land grabbers search for clues to a secure investment environment.

The comparative maps below illustrate the mixed results of the lack of agrarian reform in the state of São Paulo and visually contextualize the land grabbing phenomena. First, note in Map 1 that agriculture is present in the entire state, but that farming activity intensifies toward the west as one gets further away from the Atlantic Ocean, where urbanization is more intense. In the rural areas, the state's many medium-sized cities are not depicted, but the agrarian reform settlements are shown on Map 2; in them, collectively, 17,000 families reside in a total area of 333,344 hectares, a negligible portion of the state's 24.8 million hectares (Feliciano & Girardi, 2013). The concentration of settlements in the west attests to use of public lands to install settlements, documenting state

government's near refusal to confront rural landowners. The yellow flashes in Map 2 confirm the violence used by this class to resist a transfer of land, public or private. To design the maps, geographer Tiago Cubas used static and dynamic imagery to depict established activities and trends. The intensity of the colors used represents the combined intensity and predominance of the indicated activity. Noteworthy are the large areas of highly capitalized agriculture, such as that represented in Map 1 by the concentration of the sugarcane, orange and beef industries. The pink band and arrows at the center of this map indicate the trajectory not only of sugarcane plantations, but also of large-scale orange cultivation, two of the state's most lucrative crops.

As the key for Map 1 explains, and the accompanying tables detail, the purple circles represent the locations and relative sizes of medium to large foreign-owned properties in the state. The small black circles represent sugar and ethanol mills, most of whose owners depend on at least 25 percent of foreign capital. There are a few observable patterns of these two symbols. Several foreign-owned properties surround or are near mills, suggesting the strong probability of foreign-ownership of both sugarcane plantations and associated agro-industries. There are clusters of foreign-owned land not only in areas dominated by sugarcane, but also in those where cattle are predominant. Brazil is the world's largest beef exporter (Welch, 2006). There also seems to be a relationship between land and wealth concentration – including foreign-owned properties – and indices of concentrated poverty. In the southeast, the dotted line marks off the Ribeira River Valley as socioeconomically depressed. In the far west, the Pontal that Callado wrote about is highlighted. In the north central region, the so-called agribusiness capital of Brazil, Ribeirão Preto, is circled.

Each micro-region has its own history, but these settings on the map visually reinforce the argument of a relationship between land reform and land grabbing. Within the indicated areas, not only are foreign investors active, but also peasant movements struggling to establish and retain agrarian reform settlements. Poverty offers both arguments for their causes. For the peasant movements, rural poverty results from decades of conquest by capitalist colonizers who first eliminated the indigenous population and then exploited peasants until they had nowhere to turn to survive if not low compensation jobs on the ever larger rural estates or in informal urban markets. Foreign investors also worked several advantages in these areas. Land tends to be less-expensive, labor easier and cheaper to attract and, for some, they can feel – and represent to their audiences – that they are “contributing to local development” and “the mitigation...of human rights abuses”(PRI, 2012: 1-2).² However, the normal consequence is to deepen poverty and abuse by increasing the dependency of the poor (Fernandes, Welch & Gonçalves, 2010).

After beginning with this contemporary description of relationships between land reform and land grabbing in São Paulo state, the next section shifts the focus gradually to a slightly broader and longer view.

3 Vamos voltar ao estado de colônia³

²Taking a leading part in producing the investment guidelines quoted was TIAA-CREF, an investment management firm closely associated with U.S. academics – including this author's retirement fund – that announced in 2012 its decision to apply \$2 billion in farmland (TIAA-CREF, 2012), including the purchase of 424 thousand hectares in Brazil, where it has an 81.1 percent interest in a Brazilian real estate firm called Radar Propriedades Agrícolas. According to GRAIN (2012), Radar is “entirely controlled by Cosan,” which is one of the largest sugar producers in the world, and currently on a campaign to attract investors to buy over one billion hectares of land in South America for sugarcane and soybeans production.

³“We're going back to the state of being a colony,” the MST's Marina dos Santos told reporter Eduardo Scolese (2008).

Thus responded a leader of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST, in its Brazilian acronym), the country's leading proponent of agrarian reform, upon learning from a *Folha de S. Paulo* reporter that foreigners had purchased more Brazilian land during a recent six-month period than that designated for land reform (Scolese, 2008). Using a leaked study conducted by the National Rural Real Estate Registry System (SNCR, in its Brazilian acronym), reporter Eduardo Scolese revealed from November, 2007 to May, 2008, foreigners had purchased 1,523 rural properties, with an area totaling 2,269 square kilometers. The SNCR is part of the same ministry – Agrarian Development (MDA) – responsible for implementing Brazil's land reform policies. Scolese then contrasted these figures with the amount of area indicated for land reform appropriation by the ministry and discovered that, during the same period, the government had decreed its intention to purchase areas totaling 22 percent less than that acquired by foreigners. In other words, the cause of land reform seemed to be progressing at a less intense rate than the foreign occupation of the country.

The Scolese article helped stimulate a debate in the country that reflected deep insecurities about Brazilian sovereignty. São Paulo state was the one with the most foreign land purchases, with 888 sales. São Paulo has long attracted foreign capital, especially in the agrifood industry, but its relatively modern infrastructure as well as steadily increasing land prices made it a pretty safe bet for investors. Scolese's article also showed that the large states of the center-west region, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, had the most area affected, with nearly 25 percent of the new land purchases (530 of the 2,269 km²) occurring within their borders. These statistics documented that the total known area controlled by foreigners grew in the period from 38.3 to 40.3 thousand km². This information conflicted somewhat with statistics presented to the Brazilian Senate in March by Rolf Hackbart, director of the National Colonization and Agrarian Reform Institute (INCRA, in its Brazilian acronym). Hackbart had then revealed that the SNCR registry showed that 55 thousand km² of Brazil's territory was in foreign hands (Hackbart, 2008:13). The difference pointed to a further concern: how to identify land acquisitions by foreigners. Scolese reported that his sources had counted only the registries of individuals and companies that identified their non-Brazilian nationalities. Hackbart's number claimed to include these owners as well as Brazilian firms controlled by foreign capitalists who had registered their properties properly. Another category of difficult-to-track foreign purchasers are called "oranges" in Brazil – they are firms and individuals who use their Brazilian identities like an orange peel to hide the fact that foreign investors are at the core of the deal.

Scolese's article publicly raised the comparative question of who benefits most from the government's policies – foreigners or peasants? The relationship between land reform and land grabbing is our principal object. For the more recent debate, the data reported by Scolese in 2008 are fairly clear – at that time, the environment was more welcoming for land grabbing than land reform. However, further context is needed to evaluate the findings. In 2008, agrarian reform settlements occupied 751 thousand km² of Brazil's total area (NERA, 2009: 20). Thus, the 55 thousand km² occupied by foreigners was only 7 percent of the area dedicated to land reform. Moreover, with the total area of Brazil estimated to be 8.5 million km², the foreign invasion represents a percentage too tiny to measure. Brazilian geographer Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira adopted this perspective to criticize the land grab furor as serving only to distract attention away from the government's failure to implement its own shallow agrarian reform plan (Oliveira, 2010).

Citing slightly different totals from the *Folha de S. Paulo* article, Oliveira noted that foreign purchases accounted for "only 0.5 percent of Brazilian territory" (2010: 21). Even though the growth had been most dramatic in the center-west, foreign holding there did not exceed 1.3 percent of the region's territory. In São Paulo state, where land grabbing appeared most intense, foreign holdings paralleled national amounts at only 1.27 percent of the state's agricultural land, calculated at 167 thousand km² in the 2006 census (Gonçalves, 2009). Oliveira might have described the land grab issue as a red herring for Brazil, but referred to another of Marx's allusions when he wrote:

These data are fundamental for showing how this “new land grabbing scandal” is a farse designed to cloak other political facts relative to the Workers Party administration. Among them are these advancing counter agrarian reforms, especially in the Amazon region, and excluding from the country’s political agenda debate over agrarian reform as a public policy promoting social and economic development.

Emphasis in the original, Oliveira, 2010: 21-22

These criticisms of the Workers Party (PT, in its Brazilian acronym) government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, who served as president of Brazil from 2003 to 2010, may surprise some readers (Welch, 2011). Oliveira’s basic argument is that the PT failed to fulfill the party’s own National Agrarian Reform Plan (Brazil’s PNRA II), reoriented the meaning of land reform to emphasize the “normalization” (*regularização*, in Brazilian legalese) of the legal status of untitled rural holdings and worked successfully to suppress agrarian reform as an issue in the 2010 presidential campaign in order to save the PT candidate from having to deal with the issue. For Oliveira, the PT’s land normalization strategy – the Legal Land Program (Programa Terra Legal) – enabled land-sharks to steal millions of hectares of area from the national patrimony. Oliveira’s proofs are largely circumstantial and vigorously denied by the PT. Nevertheless, the numbers do support his arguments about the red herring of land grabbing in the Brazilian context and leaves open the question as to why Hackbart provoked the debate.⁴

Before his March, 2008 presentation, the big land news that concerned INCRA was increasing land values. High land prices are one of the chief impediments to land reform because Brazilian law requires the government to buy-out owners and price hikes stress already tight budgets for such purchases. Increased land values were associated with upward trends in agricultural commodity prices, which were related to increased fuel costs and thus increased demand for “agrofuel crops” like ethanol producing sugarcane. According to agribusiness analysts, land prices doubled from 2005 to 2008 in some sugarcane growing regions in São Paulo, where agroindustry predominates, and grains, coffee and cattle compete over land use with cane (Fortes, 2008). As a consequence, some land reform settlers have found it difficult to resist the pressure of agroindustry to rent out their lots to aggressively expanding sugarcane plantations, a topic examined in early issues of the *Journal of Peasant Studies* (Fernandes, Welch and Gonçalves, 2010).

The agribusiness analysis of land values supports the findings of Borrás et al (2012), who argued that the land grabbing is not solely linked to food prices. They concluded that in contrast to many studies, land grabbing is not centered on the food crisis but rather on what they call “flex crops,” that is to say crops like soybeans and sugarcane that have flexible markets – satisfying demands in two or more parts of the new “food-feed-fuel” complex that currently describes the multiple socioeconomic roles of large-scale agriculture. Of course, this is really just a more systematic twist on an ancient phenomenon, as agriculture’s vulnerability to outside forces – from the weather to prices – has long defined flexibility as a crucial characteristic of farm survival (Shanin, 1990). As complex as this picture is, investments in Brazil also involve commercial forests, especially eucalyptus plantations, a source of cellulose, used to produce paper and other products. Increasingly tied to foreign capital, eucalyptus plantations have steadily expanded in Brazil by nearly 5 percent annually since 2000. They now occupy 50 thousand km². By 2011, São Paulo state alone was responsible for fully 20 percent of

⁴Perhaps the more insidious trend is that of Foreign Direct Investment. As a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the World Bank estimated it at 2.69 in 2011. That means that while foreigners have a controlling interest in 1.3 percent of Brazil’s farmland, they have acquired twice as much control (“lasting management interest”) over its enterprises in general, including agribusiness (Trading Economics, 2011). There is some uncertainty in this statistic as Brazil’s Central Bank (BCB) reported a much higher percentage in its 2011 census of foreign capital report. As of the end of 2010, the BCB survey had established that the level of foreign direct investment in Brazil was equivalent to 30.8 percent of GDP (BCN, 2011).

this forest, with around 2,000km² of new area added annually since 2007 (IEA, 1983-2011). These opportunities, as well as worsening investment possibilities in the United States and Europe as various profit-taking bubbles have burst since 2008, have made the world's agricultural land market more attractive to foreign investors (McMichael, 2012).

In the context of today's struggle over foreign acquisition of Brazil's land, the competition land grabbing represents for land reform reignites the food security versus food sovereignty debate. Even the *Estado de S. Paulo*, a traditional newspaper established in the 19th century in alignment with the interests of the agricultural bourgeoisie, editorialized about the irony of worsening hunger and poverty in the world while more and more food is being produced (Novaes, 2011). On the miserably low, dollar-a-day poverty line, more than a million people exist on less in the fabulously rich state of São Paulo, the author bemoaned. This has nothing to do with the state's agricultural design, responded São Paulo secretary of agriculture and food supply João de Almeida Sampaio Filho (UNICA, 2011). With higher food prices, the state's farmers were investing in food production at an "accelerated rate" (UNICA, 2011: n.p.). He cited studies by his staff of harvest yields 102 percent higher for wheat and 13 percent higher for corn. Sampaio noted a recent 84 percent increase in areas planted in wheat – from 40 thousand hectares to 75 thousand hectares. He then noted 9.1 million hectares of the state are dedicated to pasture, that corn occupied 850 thousand hectares (used for feed, not food), orange groves 690 thousand hectares (used for export, not food), soybeans some 450 thousand hectares (used for export and/or feed, not food) and that sugarcane plantations would probably slow their growth from 300 thousand new hectares annually to 100 thousand. At the time of the interview, cane held sway over 4.9 thousandkm² of the state, but was soon to increase another 300 thousand hectares (see Table 3).

The process of expansion of the food-feed-fuel and cellulose complex caused Brazil to become an importer of some foodstuffs. But as the country has increased its productivity and become one of the world's leading exporters of many agricultural products, food importation has generally declined (Welch, 2006). For example, according to statistics compiled by the agriculture ministry, in 2003 Brazil imported 21 percent of its wheat. By 2011, the participation of imported wheat had declined to 6 percent. The worst case, often mentioned by critics of government policy, is the staple dried beans (*feijão*). Almeida, the São Paulo agriculture secretary, mentioned expectation for an increase in rice production but did not give any statistics and made no mention of beans, Brazil's second favorite staple (UNICA, 2011). Map 1 shows what a small portion of the state is dedicated to these staple crops. From 2008 to 2010, imports skyrocketed and consumers became completely dependent on foreign producers. In 2011, however, the participation of imported beans dropped to under one percent (MAPA, 2012). (Table 3 reveals an interesting aspect of the history of this crop, documenting how its area in São Paulo diminished dramatically while productivity remained almost steady.) Many other foods are imported, but their participation is also in the single digits. Nevertheless, when it is reported that more land is going to foreigners than land reform, as Scolese's article highlighted, fears over Brazilian food dependency has rapidly stimulated debate over increased prices and risks of hunger. Due to this issue, the discussion of land grabbing in Brazil quickly turned into a political debate about limiting, prohibiting or controlling foreign ownership of land, a debate that continued to percolate among administrators and legislators in the nation's capital (Pereira Faro, 2011; Hage et al, 2012).

The peasant and small farmer movements have certainly joined the debate. Today, most peasants living on agrarian reform settlements produce milk and cheese, raise egg-laying hens, plant vegetables or cultivate fruit trees for self-consumption and sale to local markets. Many producers on agrarian reform settlements count on federally subsidized contracts to provide staples to local school districts. In fact, small farms are responsible for the bulk of foodstuffs consumed by Brazilians; whether through local farmers' markets or as part of the contract-labor system that produces poultry, pork, wine grapes and other commodities for agribusiness. While CONTAG and other farm labor and

family farmer organizations have been invited to testify before the legislature, movements like the MST and Via Campesina have made their views known through publications, mobilizations and manifestations, such as the United Meeting of Workers and Peoples of the Countryside, Waters and Forest, held in Brasília in August, 2012, with the collaboration of CONTAG.

João Paulo Stedile, a founder and long-time member of the national directorate of the MST, a coordinator of the Via Campesina-Brasil, and a graduate in economics, lambasted the land grabbers. “A passel of capitalists from around the world is coming to Brazil to buy land, ethanol and agro-diesel processing plants, hydroelectric facilities, and thereby aggravating environmental problems, forcing the modification of legislation dealing with Native Americans and provoking another wave of land and wealth concentration.” He argued that “Brazilian society has been kidnapped by the agribusiness production model” (Ferreira, 2012). In an earlier text, Stedile identified the “marriage between transnational corporations and Brazil’s large proprietors of rural land” as an essential alliance for the growth of an agro-export model that is “a species of re-colonialization” that “recalls imperialist times” (Stedile, 2008). Part of the capital goes toward buying control of agro-industry, “another part of the capital has been applied to land purchases,” he continued. The massive August, 2012 meeting in Brasília sought to unify forces across various organizational divisions in order to pressure the government to issue a plan for accelerating the implementation of agrarian reform laws (BF, 2012b).

4 Reforma agrária – na lei ou na marra!

The 2012 meeting was also presented to the public as the II National Peasant Congress, referencing the first national congress that had occurred half a century earlier in November 1961. Organized by a Brazilian Communist Party front organization, the Union of Farmers and Agricultural Workers of Brazil (ULTAB, in its Brazilian acronym), the congress was significant for seeking to bring together all groups advocating profound changes to Brazil’s land tenure system, from those connected to the PCB (the Brazilian acronym for the communist party) to progressive Catholics. According to Lyndolpho Silva, who was president of ULTAB and chief of the PCB’s rural organizing sector, special accommodations were made for Francisco Julião, honorary president of the Peasant Leagues, a loose organization of peasant communities that had seen some remarkable successes in getting state governments to implement agrarian reform measures in the late 1950s. Julião, a lawyer and politician, was a remarkable orator who inspired many with his Biblical references and aggressive phrases, such as “*Reforma agrária – na lei ou na marra* (Agrarian reform, by law or by force)!” (Welch, 2010).

The first national congress also sought to influence public policy and did so by attracting the participation of several politicians, including newly installed President João Goulart, who gave one of the closing speeches, expressing explicit support for the argument that “agrarian reform is one of the reforms that the country demands in order to unleash its productive forces” (Goulart in Costa, 1993: 120). Indeed, within three years, the government established an agrarian policy agency, steered a rural labor statute through a resistant congress, helped establish hundreds of rural labor unions, and drafted an agrarian reform law that, ironically, would only be decreed by the successor administration, the first of a series of military dictators who would hold power in Brazil from April, 1964 to January, 1985 (Welch, 2012). While the mobilized peasant movement certainly stimulated governmental action, analysts have noted the exclusion of peasants and their representatives in the legislative process (Santos, 1998; Welch, 1995).

The 2012 event does not promise to be anywhere near as influential, even though the government announced the first land expropriation in a year during the event (Arruda, 2012). Analyzing the 2012 congress in light of the 1961 experience does point to some parallels between the Cold War era and the present, especially the organizer’s success in uniting CONTAG, the MST, indigenous groups and

the *quilombo* organizations behind a single banner.⁵ Editorializing about the 2012 congress, the leftist weekly newspaper *Brasil de Fato* observed, “This meeting will be historic in the experience of rural social movements because this sort of unity has occurred only one other time, there in Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais state) at the I Peasant Congress in November, 1961” (BF, 2012a).

Similar were the reasons for the gatherings. The same *Brasil de Fato* editorial described the primary motive with the following representation of the context:

because capital is on the offensive against the countryside. Under the hegemony of finance capital and transnational corporations, capitalists have imposed agribusiness models, with their new standards of ecological plunder, exploitation and production. Agribusiness constructs unity, an alliance of capital, grouping together financial capital, global corporations, the bourgeois media, and large landowners... We are witnessing the subservience of the Brazilian state in its varied negotiations with this project. The judiciary, the laws and the national congress all work only in favor of agribusiness interests.

The explanation of motives emphasizes the loss of sovereignty at the hands of transnational capital and its consequences for people and the environment. Land grabbing is not addressed here. In fact, noticeable in the social movement critique is a tendency to downplay land grabbing by turning it into an expected consequence of neoliberal capitalism and globalization. As Stédile and other congress organizers argued, the economic crisis had worsened Brazil’s situation by encouraging foreign capitalists to invest in Brazil’s land. It was therefore necessary to organize the 2012 congress with the “objective of defining common strategies in favor of public policies aimed to empower excluded populations, such as peasants, runaway slave community residents and indigenous peoples” (Ferreira, 2012).⁶

In his report on the 1961 congress, Silva emphasized two key reasons for ULTAB’s efforts to organize the event. Let’s take a look at each.

In Brazil, two fundamental contradictions that worsen with each passing day demand our attention at this actual historical stage. They are the contradiction between the Nation and the imperialists and their domestic agents and the contradiction between the strengthening forces of production and the land monopoly. As a consequence of worsening conditions, consciousness and struggle are growing among the laboring masses of the country and city, students, the small business owners, and some elements of the national owning class of the need for an agrarian reform that can break the actual Brazilian agrarian structure.

Silva in Costa, 1993: 105

During the Cold War, the discourse was different and terms like “imperialism” were never far from the center of debate. Communists and capitalists spoke of “stages,” reinforcing a shared linear view of historical progress. Another term relatively alien to contemporary debates is “the masses,”

⁵Interestingly, CONTAG was the direct successor organization to ULTAB, with Lyndolpho Silva passing from the presidency of ULTAB to that of the newly formed CONTAG. While no such direct relationship exists between the MST and the Ligas, the MST has long identified itself as having taken up the baton once carried by Julião. In the case of the 2012 congress, different from the 1961 event, it was now the Ligas’ successor that reached out to form an alliance with ULTAB’s successor.

⁶In Portuguese, the quote is: “objetivo é definir estratégias comuns em favor de políticas públicas para populações excluídas, como camponeses, quilombolas e indígenas,” wherein “*quilombolas*” are people who identify themselves as descendants of enslaved Africans who seek to live in communities recognized as originally settled by fugitive slaves. These settlements are called “*quilombos*.”

especially defined exclusively as “workers.” But other themes seem to parallel those expressed in the context of the 2012 congress.

The main parallel is conflict between Brazilian national interests (“the Nation”) and those of foreigners and their internal allies (“the imperialists”). For Silva, this was one of the two “fundamental contradictions” of the “actual historical stage.” By monopolizing the land, the imperialists and their landlord allies produced the second fundamental contradiction, which was to impede continued growth of “the productive forces” of the nation. Like other contradictions, these seemed to be producing a solution in the form of the rising consciousness of workers aligned with other progressive and nationalist groups and individuals of the need to struggle against imperialist domination and “for an agrarian reform that [could] break the actual Brazilian agrarian structure” (Silva in Costa, 1993:105). In the final declaration of the Belo Horizonte congress, the territorial takeover, the land grabbing of the period – “o monopólio da terra” (land monopoly) – was described as “linked to colonizing capital, of foreign origin, notoriously North American” (ULTAB in Costa, 1993:64). In other words, what today is described as “agribusiness” was, in Silva’s day, “imperialism.”

According to organizers, both sought to monopolize Brazilian land, dominate the country and make it subservient to a foreign agenda. The theme of renewed colonization appears here, much as it does in current discourses. Both narratives emphasize, too, the importance to foreigners of internal allies, principally among the owning classes. In the countryside, Silva and the 1961 congress stressed the existence of an alliance between “*latifundiários*” and imperialists – the imperialists supported unproductive, large-scale estates as a way of preventing economic development and ensuring the dependency of Brazil. For Stédile and the 2012 organizers, “large landowners” count as key allies, aligned with foreigners to profit from the exploitation of workers and nature. In Silva’s day, these collaborationists were blamed for “delivering” the country to foreigners yet some bourgeois fractions – “small business owners and some elements of the national owning class” – could be rallied to the cause of defending the nation against the imperialists. Today, such allies would surely be welcomed, but the narrative of the 2012 congress is one which emphasizes how “agribusiness constructs a unity, an alliance of capital...to impose new production models” to extract wealth from the nation and cross-class allies are not sought in an explicit way.

Concern about the political consequences of these contradictions was Silva’s second point of departure in describing the 1961 congress. Planning for the event was stimulated, according to his report, by congressional debates in support of land reform legislation that would be counterproductive. Wrote Silva, “we have to increase the pressure of the masses on the government and the parliament to vote against reactionary laws. We need to initiate an action that can quickly achieve a big repercussion throughout the entire country.” In his item 2, Silva claimed to have been driven by “obedience to the orientation of our international conferences” in opting to organize the 1961 congress (Silva in Costa, 1993: 107). In May, Silva had attended the I Latin American Regional Conference of Plantation Workers in Havana, Cuba. In collaboration with the Soviet Union, the young Cuban Revolution had already begun to serve as a regional base for the Communist world’s institutions (Castañeda, 1993). The 1961 conference represented the first effort to coordinate within the region the organizing work of the USSR-allied Trade Unions International of Agricultural Forestry and Plantation Workers (Welch, 1995). In reporting on the Havana meeting, Silva wrote that delegations from 14 of the region’s countries agreed that “the large landowners and big international trusts, principally North American ones, are the great exploiters of agricultural workers and farmers in the countries of Latin America” (Silva, 1961: 5).

According to Silva’s report on the regional conference, conferees agreed that “profound agrarian reform” was necessary, ...for the peasants to be able to achieve economic emancipation, that is to say, to become free of exploitation by large landowners and foreign companies, needed is a profound agrarian reform that liquidates the latifundio

regime of landholding. For this reason, the conference recommends that all peasants and rural workers continue to organize themselves, that they remain united with workers in the city and will all people interested in the progress of our countries; that it is necessary to intensify the struggle for national independence...

Silva, 1961: 5

Thus, the second motive was to mobilize enough organizations and people to influence the political process, something the Belo Horizonte congress tried to do in direct and specific ways. For example, the participation of the president and prime minister in the proceedings ensured the attention of the state. Scholars agree that the broad and intensive level of mobilization at the time encouraged congressional action and made it necessary for the government to address the question of agrarian reform, even though peasants and their representatives were excluded from the legislative process (Camargo, 1986; Medeiros, 1989; Welch, 1995; Santos, 1998). However, as the revival of the issue in the post-dictatorship period suggests, approved legislation did not prevent “reactionary laws” from being proposed or implemented.

Just as organizers of the 2012 congress observed in the case of the agribusiness empire, the imperialism of the American system in Latin America during the Cold War was said to promote oligopoly in the countryside. Silva defined “three currents” in the political conjuncture (Silva in Costa, 1993: 106). One was formed “by the *latifundiários* and the domestic agents of imperialism, who struggle against any proposals to change the land tenure system.” Another was “composed of the national owning class that was not bound to the imperialist agenda but interested in growing the internal market and eliminating obstacles to the free development of productive forces such as that of the monopoly control of land” in Brazil. And the third included “landless peasants, workers, and radical sectors of the intellectual and owning classes.” His chief concern in organizing the congress at a time when the call for agrarian reform was coming from all quarters was to help ensure that the first group did not get its way. As he wrote, they “defend an agrarian organization that establishes a group of laws and measures designed only to support and improve conditions for ‘producers’ and production” (*Ibid*: 106-107). This was the essence of developmentalist logic that prevailed at the time.

Economic development theory oriented policymakers to link the agrarian question to the industrialization process. As the historian Ana Maria dos Santos observed, in the agrarian reform proposals of the period, “the development and capital accumulation goals always held precedence over the interests of labor and workers” (Santos, 1998: 3). The countryside would have the function to create a demand for the industrial goods sector, expanding the market for agricultural machines and chemicals. Increases in the production of foodstuffs would serve as a subsidy to the industrial sector by forcing down the cost of living of urban-based workers, thus helping to reduce the pressure to increase wages. Moreover, the use of modern inputs such as fertilizers and machines would help reduce the need for manual labor in the countryside, “liberating” workers for the industrial labor market where the presence of a surplus of workers would also help keep wages down. In contradistinction to the development discourse, however, advocates of agrarian reform promised urban and rural audiences that reform policies were meant to promote the “long-term stability of the man of the country” or “the long-term stability of the man and his family on the land,” as São Paulo governor Carvalho Pinto argued in explaining his version of agrarian reform to the public in 1960 (Carvalho Pinto, 1960: 11).

In March, the governor presented his “Agrarian Revision” bill to the state legislature. One of his arguments in getting the law passed was that Cuban leaders had stimulated the Cuban Revolution little more than a year earlier by ignoring the need to make changes to the land tenure system. His carefully named “revision” counted on a progressive tax to force *latifundiários* to modernize their practices and make their estates more productive. The tax was to go into a fund that would be used to buy poorly exploited lands and establish colonies of family farmers, whose main function would be

as producers of foodstuff for nearby urban centers. However, most large-farm owner groups opposed the tax and the national legislature proscribed the states' ability to collect property taxes in April 1961, creating an insurmountable obstacle for the implementation of the law. The politician who gained election for governor after Carvalho Pinto opposed the law and together these factors reduced its effects to very small proportions. During the law's short lifespan, only 176 families were installed on two settlements (Tolentino, 2011).

Despite Silva's cynicism about such "reactionary laws," PCB legislators, elected clandestinely through allied political parties, voted in favor of the "agrarian revision" bill (Tolentino, 2011). In the context of the 1961 congress, he spoke of more radical forms of agrarian reform, especially modification of the country's 1946 constitution to allow expropriation of land without having to pay for it in cash, a requirement based in private property rights which essentially prevented land reform from occurring.⁷ The Belo Horizonte declaration also called for registering and analyzing the use of rural properties above 500 hectares, suggesting that they were most likely to be expropriated should they fall into the "latifundio" category (ULTAB in Costa, 1993). In the context of the times, even the PCB-guided peasant movement fundamentally shared a model of development that emphasized production. Consider the congress declaration's comments on the relationship between the land monopoly, agrarian reform and food shortages.

With a view toward the rapid increase of production, especially of foodstuffs that could attenuate and correct the choking shortages confronting the nation's people, above all the laboring masses of the city and country, the state must develop a plan for enhancing agriculture that assures a just return for producers (in the original, preços mínimos compensadores nas fontes de produção), efficient and cheap transportation, subsidies for the purchase of farm implements and other means of production, guarantees for adequate supplies of seed, fertilizer, pesticide, etc. for small farmers (in the original, pequenos agricultores)...and combats favoritism for large planters (in the original, grandes fazendeiros)

ULTAB in Costa, 1993: 68-69

This relatively technical developmentalist discourse was consistent with the Communist world's perspective of the need to pass through the historical stage of capitalism in order to achieve socialism.

The capitalist point of view was especially articulated by a group of conservative thinkers, politicians, industrialists and planters that, with funding from the U.S. government, worked to undermine the Goulart government. In 1963, members of the Social Studies and Research Institute (IPES, in its Brazilian acronym) and the Brazilian Democratic Action Institute (IBAD, in its Brazilian acronym) voted Carvalho Pinto's failed "agrarian revision" as the most worthy land reform model for the country (Tolentino, 2011; Dreifuss, 1981). A team began work on a similar national plan and, soon after the overthrow of Goulart by a military-civilian conspiracy, the military regime of General Castello Branco in November 1964, decreed as law the Land Statute. This law oriented all agrarian

⁷The Brazilian constitution of 1946, which was influenced in part by PCB delegates to the constituent assembly, included a section on "Social and Economic Order." In it, Article 147 "conditioned property use" to "social well-being" and charged the state with "promoting the just distribution of property, with equal opportunity to all." This may have been a reference to foreigners, as Article 141 stated that foreigners "resident in the country" were entitled to the same rights to property as Brazilians. The same article specified, to the chagrin of the PCB delegates, that property owners had to be paid a "just indemnity in specie" if their lands were expropriated for "public utility or social interest" Thus, the congress's emphasis on the issue. (Quotes are author's translations of the 1946 constitution).

reform measures taken until the aftermath of the dictatorship when, in 1988, a new federal constitution was promulgated. Even then, the statute continued to influence Brazil's land tenure and use system through priorities on development and productivity.

5 Latifundio and agribusiness

In a recent article the Brazilian geographer Bernardo Mançano Fernandes examined parallels between the unproductive latifundio and agribusiness. He claimed they share similar negative characteristics common to capitalist agriculture, especially tendencies toward land concentration and the exploitation of human and natural resources. In addition to their common accumulation of land, the former exploits peasants by including them in a system of subservience while the second excludes them through displacement facilitated by the use of technology. Another contradictory parallel is their linkage to land reform. As Fernandes wrote,

If the territory of the latifundio can be expropriated for purposes of agrarian reform, the territory of agribusiness presents itself as sacred, a place that cannot be violated. Agribusiness is a new type of latifundio, one that is even more expansive, one that now not only concentrates its dominion over the land, but also over production technologies and development policies.

Fernandes, 2009: 172

The sacred nature of agribusiness makes its comparison to the latifundio especially interesting in its implication for agrarian reform. The latifundio needed to be reformed, not agribusiness, even though certain properties might very well qualify as unproductive, antisocial uses of resources. Another recent article, this one by an agribusiness advocate, also sees the roots of today's "farmer" (*fazendeiro*) in the "rich and politically influential producer" of the past. Today, she writes, the concept has changed and "he has turned into a businessman who attends to production processes, inputs, animal well-being, the machinery, market distribution, climate forecasts, commodity price fluctuations, sustainability, environmental laws, and labor laws, among thousands of other details" (Cavinatto, 2012). Since agribusiness presents itself as inherently productive, the new agribusiness giants insist that their estates serve social well-being and should not be subject to agrarian reform.⁸

The "untouchability" of agribusiness started to be challenged several years before the 2012 congress. Until the 21st century, land struggles usually targeted public lands and private ranches considered anti-social, following the articles 184 and 185 of the 1988 Constitution that made the federal government responsible for expropriating in the public interest, for purposes of agrarian reform, those estates which failed to "fulfill their social function." The Constitution had consolidated and altered various precedents to establish criteria for expropriating land that were based primarily on an assessment of the adequacy of its use (productivity) and the owner's respect of labor and environmental laws. Violations of these criteria could result in expropriation, with payments not in money but notes payable in 20 years. However, the growing influence of transnational agricultural corporations in Brazil made targeting an experimental farm Monsanto operated in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul an imperative for the Via Campesina, during the first World Social Forum being held in Porto Alegre in 2001. The main goal of this action was to attract attention to the use of genetically modified seed in Brazil, despite ambiguity about the legal use of such seed.

While many were the subsequent confrontations in various states against agribusiness, a 2009 occupation of an orange grove in São Paulo owned by Cutrale, a transnational Brazilian orange juice

⁸Just as the latifundio was criticized for violating "social well-being" in post-World War II debates throughout Latin America, from the time of the 1964 Land Statute to the 1988 Constitution "social function" remains the key indicator of whether or not a property may be condemned for purposes of land reform in Brazil.

producer, is a useful case in point. To provide a little context, the state of São Paulo is responsible for producing 80 percent of the orange juice consumed in the world. Cutrale, which was founded in Araraquara, São Paulo, in 1968 and takes its name from co-founders José Luis and Giuseppe Cutrale, has concentrated power in the industry by taking more and more control over production, especially the orange groves themselves, a significant threat to thousands of family farmers. The company now owns more than 53 thousand hectares of orange grove in São Paulo and Minas Gerais, plus soybean and cornfields in other states and countries, making it a huge landowner. In 2005, Cutrale bought part of the orange juice production capacity in Brazil of U.S.-based agribusiness giant Cargill, bringing about greater concentration in the industry, and enhancing its political power as well as its ability to force down wages and increase its share of profits. Until 2011, when two other large producers combined their operations, it was the world's largest orange juice exporter, exporting nearly 90 percent of its product, most of it to the United States, where a sister company has its headquarters as well as 6,000 hectares of orange grove in Florida. As a privately held firm, the company's finances are not available for inspection, but all appearances suggest that it has welcomed foreign investment, including a close relationship with Coca-Cola, which owns the Minute Maid juice brand (Welch & Fernandes, 2008; MST, 2011; Turioni, 2012). Thus, Cutrale is a good example of the transnational regional corporations involved in land grabbing in the Americas identified by Borras (2011). The basic model of its success is vertical integration, wherein land is the fundamental starting point.

Cutrale's size and influence was one of the qualities that prompted the MST to organize the occupation of Cutrale's Fazenda Santo Henrique near Iaras, São Paulo. The movement had in hands years of court records claiming the 2,600 hectare plantation was part of a much larger area owned by the federal government and illegally privatized (AE, 2009). The legality of Cutrale's title to the area had been in court since 2006 and the MST occupation, as well as one in 2008 and later in 2011, was intended to force a decision. The movement had hoped that, in Brazil, as in other countries, the public's suspicion of concentrated power would help sway the courts to favor expropriation for land reform. But the media did not play to that sentiment. Rather, the media used the occupation to demonstrate the lawlessness of the MST and to open congressional hearings to intimidate the movement. With agribusiness represented in the press as Brazil's leading export sector, responsible for the country's new found economic stability, penniless peasant occupiers and their radical spokespeople were depicted as a band of ruffians out to steal land from one of the state's most productive and world-renowned businesses. Aerial video was shot of the occupiers uprooting part of the grove to establish their occupation, imagery used to question their identity as farmers, not to mention their "green" credentials. Viewers were instigated to ask, what sort of farmer would up-root producing fruit trees? To help explain its action, the MST mirrored official practices in establishing a popular tribunal to judge Cutrale. Their own "prosecutors" produced a lengthy, well-researched dossier to reveal the alleged crimes of the corporation, including illegal possession of the occupied grove and court cases against the company for violating both labor and environmental laws (MST, 2011). The MST already maintained one agrarian reform settlement in the region, which served as a base of operations to organize occupations to facilitate the land reform expropriation process.

Occupations were also used as a form a resistance in the 1960s. Failing agro-industries that refused to pay their field and plant workers faced occupation by members of the workforce who organized prolonged sit-ins to gain back wages and stimulate expropriation processes. In São Paulo, ULTAB worked more to organize unions and in this process, strikes over wages and work conditions were typical. If the firm were foreign-owned, the cases tended to attract more attention (Welch, 2010). However, as we compare the two historical moments and the discourses of "land monopoly" and "land grabbing," it is useful to go beyond the allegations of militants. As suggested by the debate over land grabbing, the current statistical record is not entirely reliable or coherent. The numbers from Silva's day are even less concrete and reliable as the legal basis and technical mechanisms for keeping such records dates from the 1970s. It was Law 5,709 of 1971 that specifically sought to regulate foreign acquisitions for the first time (Oliveira, 2010). Even though the Land Law of 1850

mandated the registration of titles and the 1964 Land Statute was even more specific in the type and extent of information that needed to be recorded for each rural property, it was only with the 1971 law that the national origin of the individual or firms who could own rural property came to be specifically monitored.⁹

As a developing country, Brazil has been influenced by international financial institutions to adjust its policies to attract foreign capital investment. While political conditions have at times created pressure to control these investments, the exact nature of such control has been much debated. In the 1960s, attempts to limit the percentage of profit foreign companies could export from Brazil to 10 percent was considered to be one of the motives for elite and U.S. opposition to the Goulart government. Article 172 of the 1988 Constitution states that federal law should regulate international investments and profit-taking, but it does not say how. In regards to land, article 190 specifies that, "The law will regulate and limit the acquisition or rental of rural property by foreign individuals or firms and establish the cases that will require authorization from Congress." With the exception of specific rules that require foreign capitalists to obtain federal authorization before buying lands within 150 km of national boundaries, the main characteristic of new regulations has centered on just how to determine if the purchaser or owner is Brazilian or foreign. Initially, rules treated Brazilian individuals and firms that used foreign capital as foreign if the origin of the capital was a person or firm based outside the country. When it was found that the foreign individual lived in Brazil or the foreign company's headquarters and the majority of its capital was located in Brazil, and then the person or firm was to be considered Brazilian. The 1988 constitution incorporated these distinctions in the property rights between Brazilian and foreign individuals and firms until 1995, when an amendment revoked the relevant articles (Hackbart, 2008). This was the apogee of the influence of neoliberal reforms imposed on Brazil.

In 2008, INCRA's Hackbart commented that since then the "situation permits the untrammelled occupation of Brazilian land by foreigners, especially in the legal Amazon region where foreign investment in Brazilian firms is prevalent" (Hackbart, 2008: 2). He based his conclusion on evidence from the national land registry that demonstrated that 55 percent of rural real estate listed in the name of foreign individuals or firms was located in the Amazon region. Until this writing, the law still governs the need to indicate the nationality of the purchaser and restricts foreign individuals and firms from owning land in border zones without specific authorization. Size limits also apply to foreign purchasers, including interesting limits to the same foreigner owning more than 25 percent of the area of a single municipality or people of the same foreign nationality residing in the same municipality owning individually more than 40 percent of the 25 percent limit (Hackbart, 2008: 8). But these limits are generally overlooked and transnational lumber and paper corporations have been allowed to own land in the border zones. In response to the debate over land grabbing, however, the executive and legislative branches revisited the laws and regulations. In 2010, the federal attorney general interpreted existing law as restricting the area foreigners could hold to 50 "fiscal modules," effectively limiting areas to 5,000 hectares. Real estate firms said the interpretation "put the brakes on the land market" in 2011 (Hennemann, 2011), but 2012 data collected by the non-governmental organization GRAIN demonstrate otherwise (see Table 4). What the press may have emphasized are complaints on the part of real estate brokers and industry representatives who do not want to answer to anyone.

Even with confusing legal parameters and reporting practices, INCRA has produced figures that suggest prevailing trends in the foreign ownership of land at municipal, state and national scales. An economist trained at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, José Miguel Pretto was contracted to analyze the confidential SNCR registries in 2008 in order to determine the extent of foreign

⁹ Oliveira (2010) points to the incredible irony of this law given the vast areas of Brazil, especially in the northern Amazon region, that were sold following its appearance. See, too, Garrido Filha, 1980.

ownership of Brazil's territory. His 2008 report carefully compiled the data at national, state and local levels as of June 4, 2008 (Pretto, 2008). Methodologically, Pretto reviews not only the law, but the methodology adopted by the SNCR. The system divides rural properties into three size categories – small, medium and large. Because of Brazil's vast size and diversity of ecological zones, these sizes are not determined by the metric system but by "fiscal modules." These modules are units of measure designed by law in 1980 to establish the minimum area necessary for a rural property to be economically viable in the support of an average family based on the socioeconomic and ecological conditions of the municipality in which the farm is located (INCRA, 2012). Each module is translated into hectares, facilitating the categorization of small, medium and large farms and ranches for each location. A small-sized property can have one to four modules; a medium property is calculated as being from four to fifteen modules and a large rural estate has more than 15 modules. The 2010 decision that limited foreign purchase to 5,000 hectares is based on what might be called "the very large" category because it is based on the largest local calculation of the area encompassed by 50 fiscal modules.

Much of the data is interesting, but for our purposes, the historical findings are the most important to examine. The bar graph in Figure 1 demonstrates that the majority of foreigners (89 percent) registered their titles from the 1970s to the present. We know from the legal history above that the government only emphasized the necessity of identifying the nationality of purchasers from 1971 to the 1990s, such that the representation the data create for the decades before 1970 must be questioned. The second graph from the Pretto study, our Figure 2, contrasts interestingly with Figure 1 in representing a dramatic decline in registration in the 1990s, just when other evidence suggests growth in foreign investments due to the deregulation of agriculture in the context of international pressure to liberalize the primary sector (CEBRAC, 1994). In fact, when we compare it to the database in Table 2, we can see that errors were made in the study, as the bars do not correspond to the percentages calculated for the 1990s. Moreover, in Figure 1, overall foreign land registries and areas drop off only slightly, confirming the need to recalculate the data used to make the graph.

Especially important for our study is the steady growth in foreign acquisition of Brazilian land that is demonstrated in Figure 1. As Table 2 shows, there was a big jump in registries from the 1940s to the 1950s and a doubling of registrations from the 1950s to the 1960s. Although foreign registries as a percentage of total land purchases were very small at one percent in the 1940s, four percent in the 1950s and eight percent in the 1960s, the upward trend certainly fueled the fire. The 1961 Declaration of Belo Horizonte described the concentration of ownership in land as a sign of the "predominance of latifundio proprietorship" calculating that only 3.4 percent of owners controlled 62 percent of agricultural land (ULTAB in Costa, 1993: 64). This "land monopoly, linked to foreign colonizing capital, notably North American, dominates Brazilian political life," as the 1961 congress declared. If this was the case, Brazil's 2006 agricultural census shows how the trends only worsened by revealing that the control of 69 percent of agricultural land was concentrated among 1.3 percent of all properties (Teixeira, 2011).

The concentration of land in a smaller number of hands is, of course, the bottom-line that animates concern about the "foreignization" of ownership. Consider that the 3.4 percent of owners cited in 1961 is equivalent to 1.3 percent today (around 70,000 people or firms), while the quantity of land held by this group increased not only in terms of percentage but even more so in terms of area, more than doubling from 105.5 to 228.5 million hectares. In terms of the Gini coefficient, the index went from 0.836 in 1967 to 0.872 in 2006 (Mueller & Mueller, 2006; Farid, 2009).

Returning to Pretto's bar graphs (Figures 1 & 2), it is interesting to observe that the largest number of foreign purchases came in the 1980s, adding more evidence to the skepticism raised by the geographer Oliveira (2010) about the current controversy. In the 1980s, in the midst of a transition from military to civilian rule, no such alarm bells were sounded, although fear of U.S. imperialism was

just as pervasive among leftist groups as it had been in the 1960s. The area size information parallels the story of the registries, with even a greater rate of growth until the 1980s, when the highest quantity of land sold to foreigners was registered. Even with an incomplete basis of calculation for the first decade of the 21st century, two and half more years of sales was unlikely to cause the number of purchases or the size of areas to outpace that of the 1980s, especially considering the public outcry and reports of a questionable slow down in purchases.

The statistics in and of themselves do not support either of the arguments of the 1961 or 2012 peasant congresses, either the imperialist land monopoly or the agribusiness land grabbing phenomena. Another parallel? Not quite. In the case of the Cold War period, the PCB was largely responsible for raising the question. Note the specificity of Silva's representation of the allegations against the role of foreign capital in consolidating the land monopoly in the Latin American countryside by the conference delegates in Cuba in May, 1961:

In their concluding remarks, all the delegates identified as principal factors contributing to this situation the existence of the latifundio regime and the actions of foreign-owned companies operating in diverse Latin American countries, among them Anderson Clayton, Sanbra and the large meat-packing plants of Armour, Anglo and Swift, that operate not only industries but also as owners of large tracts of land.

Among the transnational agricultural firms mentioned, three were from the United States – Anderson-Clayton, Armour and Swift. Anglo was English and Sanbra Dutch. All were allies of the U.S. in the Cold War. Anderson Clayton and Sanbra specialized in cotton production and textiles, but also produced oil from cotton seeds. Anderson Clayton also produced and bought other nuts and beans, especially peanuts and soybeans. Anglo, Armour and Swift controlled large areas for cattle grazing and feed; they all produced meat for domestic markets in South America and exported beef to the U.S. and Europe. Each company sought to enhance their control over the factors of production, seeking alliances with politicians and the state, to benefit their businesses and weaken labor. They had large operations in São Paulo state and farmers in one of the two “agrarian revision” settlements established in the 1960s produced peanuts for Anderson Clayton. Eventually, competition eliminated all of them, but at the time, they were giants in their markets and certainly worthy targets for criticism, despite their uncontested socioeconomic functions.¹⁰

Communist attacks on the imperialists had some influence during the Cold War. Nationalist sentiment was generally high and successive administrations fanned the flames to nationalize some firms and compose policies intended to control investments in development by restricting the export of profits. Before he became president in 1961, Vice President Goulart had been sent to China to try to open trade with this large communist nation. This voyage became fodder for critics and a way of generating opposition toward Goulart among U.S. officials. As president, Goulart's relationship with the U.S. was a difficult one. Instead of helping Goulart, the U.S. treated him as a “fellow traveler” and undercut his authority by distributing financial support directly to state governors critical of his administration, such as that of Governor Adhemar de Barros in São Paulo. After Goulart, successive governments sought to strengthen Brazil's alliance with the United States by cultivating a positive foreign investment climate in Brazil, generating favorable conditions partly by suppressing peasant

¹⁰Sanbra was actually a creation of the Bunge family (see note 11), with its corporate headquarters established in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1859. In the 1960s, Sanbra's name changed to Santista Alimentos and by 1999, all subsidiaries were consolidated under the Bunge brand-name, with corporate headquarters moved to New York. Anderson Clayton is based in California but was bought out by Queensland Cotton of Australia in 1997. Swift gradually allied with Armour and Swift-Armour took over Anglo and became known as the Swift Meat Corporation. In 2005, however, an aggressive Brazilian meat company from Goiás state – JBS – used inter-American development bank funds to buy out Swift.

and labor militancy. The military regime ironically utilized a nationalist discourse to “internationalize” the economy by arguing that foreign investment would enhance Brazilian independence. Civilian governments since 1985, pressured by neoliberal logic to privatize an array of state-owned companies, welcomed an explosion of foreign money. However, the novelty of the post-Cold War, globalization period was much broader due largely to the diverse origin of these investors. The Cold War had made it impossible for a U.S. ally like Brazil to do much business with the socialist world, but with the collapse of the bi-polar world order, Brazil not only expanded trade greatly with China but also formed an economic alliance with Russia, India and China – all previously off-limits – with the BRICS coalition of “emerging market” countries, that also included South Africa.

Regarding “land grabbing,” Table 4 demonstrates the diverse origins of recent foreign investors. The list sits in striking contrast to the much more limited list suggested by Silva’s brief discussion of foreign agricultural companies. Nevertheless, true to its role as hegemonic power in the Americas, U.S. companies purchased the largest area in Brazil in recent years. Companies headquartered in neighboring Argentina are in a distant second place, confirming a “hallmark” of trans-regional land grabbing by transnational firms based in the region (Borras et al, 2012: 859).¹¹ In third place, however, China’s presence reflects changed relationships in world order of the Globalization Era.

In the state of São Paulo, many more foreign agribusinesses have active operations, as do many more foreign investors. In general, São Paulo officials and capitalists have welcomed foreign investors as partners and competitors who help stimulate enterprise (Rama, 2005; Chaddad & Jank, 2006; Invest in Brazil, 2011).¹² The supposedly green energy produced by sugarcane caused numerous prominent Americans, from Bill Clinton to Bill Gates, to invest in dozens of new ethanol plants (*usinas*) built around the state since oil prices started to increase dramatically in 2004. In addition to the distilleries, many medium and large property investors were identified by Pretto’s study of the land registry. Map 1 represents the territorial spread and principal agricultural interests of foreign occupation in the state.

6 Conclusion

As we have seen, the objective of regulating land grabbing is one of the principal issues that unites oppositional organizations from rural labor and family farmer institutions such as CONTAG (2011), to peasant organizations like the MST, to ethnic-identity movements like the indigenous and *quilombola* communities. All continue to see land reform – that is to say, radical agrarian reform policies that transform land tenure and use systems – as essential to their future as productive citizens.

¹¹Notably, Sanbra is an example of the deep-roots of transnational corporate capital within South America. According to official corporate history, Ernest Bunge, one of two of the founder’s grandsons, moved to Argentina in 1884 and founded Bunge y Born to export grains from the country. In 1905, the company started buying smaller agricultural firms in Brazil, establishing Sanbra in 1923 (Bunge, 2012).

¹² The state government of São Paulo is keen on attracting foreign investment in rural land. On the current site of the state’s Secretary of Science, Technology and Economic Development, one finds a 164 page *Legal Guide for the Foreign Investor in Brazil*, in which Governor Geraldo Alckmin emphasizes foreign direct investment as a “valuable tool” in São Paulo’s drive to “gain a competitive edge” in international markets (CESA, 2004: 3). Chapter 12 of the book is dedicated to “Acquisition of Real Estate in Brazil,” with special attention to rural property. In this subsection, foreign companies are informed that rural land acquisition is permitted “if the purpose is the implementation of agricultural, cattle-raising, industrialization or colonization projects.” Moreover, the guide underscores the lack of restrictions on “Brazilian companies with foreign equity control,” indicating the path of least resistance open to foreign capital interested in buying farmland in Brazil (CESA, 2004: 74). Since the manual available on line at this writing is a 2004 edition, apparently the spate of criticism regarding land grabbing has not caused any changes in the legal parameters or concern regarding the appearance of delivering the national patrimony to foreigners. Moreover, despite ITESP’s supposed commitment to agrarian reform and the institute’s control over rural property, no mention is made of the entity or agrarian reform policies at the state or national level.

Whereas imperialism was defined as the source of the problem in the past, today's militants speak of a renewed colonization and for the need finally "decolonize" Brazil in order to fend off what are seen as neocolonial raids on the national patrimony (Reis, 2011; Mignolo, 2003). For peasant groups, government policies that restrict foreign-ownership of land and promote agrarian reform are worth fighting for as they can serve as a basis for resistance and expressions of sovereignty that can be used to strengthen alternative political economies, based on popular culture, family labor and the equitable distribution of wealth. For agribusiness, however, these policies are generally seen as impediments to market forces that damage Brazil's productivity and image, causing capitalists to invest in other countries, thereby hurting Brazil's competitiveness and ability to provide for the basic needs of the chronically poor (Pereira & Beto, 2011; VE, 2012).

In the post-WWII period of our study, the state has generally supported a bourgeois perspective that aligns significantly with that of agribusiness leaders. Various workarounds have been developed to appease popular and international pressure to implement agrarian reform and guarantee foreign investment without appearing to deliver the country's natural wealth to foreigners. From a functional perspective, however, agrarian reform policy has reluctantly been implemented, not to change the land tenure system, but to diminish mobilization, reduce rural poverty, guarantee dependent local labor supplies, and attract development to remote or depressed areas, whereas foreign direct investment in land, infrastructure and industry is explicitly welcomed in all sizes, shapes and nationalities.

The paper has shown the significant extent to which large-scale foreign land acquisitions have been debated for many decades in Brazil. In fact, the record suggests that a higher quantity of the national territory was sold to foreigners in the decade of 1980 than that in 2000. Although our use of the 1961 and 2012 congresses as an organizing principle overlooked a detailed account of events in the 1980s, the decade was obviously important as demonstrated by our discussion of the MST (founded in 1984) and the land reform and land grab articles then integrated into Brazil's 1988 Constitution. In the 1960s, they were criticized as "imperialist" interventions in the national economy that helped strengthen the "land monopoly" generated by the historical development of the latifundio. The Cold War encouraged us-against-them thinking: "they" were obviously the United States and its allies, while "we" were sometimes Brazilians and sometimes exploited brother and sister workers and peasants from all over the world. In the 2000s, the land grabbers were seen as part and parcel of delivering Brazil to foreign capitalists urged by neoliberals on a global scale. Opponents called it "foreignization," a name that revealed complex ambiguities, such as an unwillingness to embrace entirely an us-against-them nationalism in the context of participating in a transnational resistance movement (the Via Campesina), while emphasizing nevertheless the threats posed from "Others" by the purchase of national territory. During the Cold War period, the land monopoly supported by the imperialists was criticized for preventing Brazilians from producing adequate food supplies for the masses. In the Globalization era, foreignization threatened food security by buying-up lands that could be used for agrarian reform settlements to produce food.

Governments were involved in nearly all of the dynamics analyzed in the study. States shaped the land reform laws, from their composition to their implementation. Governments regulated and registered land purchases, viewing these measures as control mechanisms while generally encouraging the sale of national territory to foreign firms and individuals. Land reform served as window dressing, that is, agrarian reform brought government subsidized development to the countryside. Land reform settlements served to satisfy the demands of capitalist agriculture (whether domestic or foreign) for temporary land and labor needs, as settlers were forced to rent their lands and sell their labor to sugar plantations and other agribusiness interests in their areas.

The evidence that purchasers from 12 countries, from nearby Argentina to far-off New Zealand, recently bought huge parcels of Brazilian land seems to support one of the premises of the “empire” that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) present as a “new paradigm” for capitalist hegemony. Very much influenced by the U.S. form of empire-building, the agribusiness model initiated there in the 1950s has attracted entrepreneurs from many countries to expand the economic and cultural occupation capitalist agriculture represents. They wrote,

The declining sovereignty of nation-states and their increasing inability to regulate economic and cultural exchanges is in fact one of the primary symptoms of the coming of Empire.... In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers.... The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over

Hardt and Negri, 2000: xii-xiv. Emphasis in the original

Those last two lines, taken as central to their argument, guaranteed the authors profound attacks from the Latin American left. In 2002, the Argentine social scientist Atilio A. Boron published a book in which he demonstrated with Noam Chomsky-like fervor and detail the on-going imperialist nature of the United States and the fundamental role of its government and military in obtaining territory and guaranteeing security for U.S.-based transnational corporations.

Hardt and Negri do not deny the power of the U.S., but claim that its influence is essentially diffused through TNCs. Just a few years before the book appeared, however, the renowned liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith (who, as economic advisor to four presidents, was no stranger to power), shot down the stateless premise of their argument (Carreto, 1997). For Galbraith, unlike Hardt and Negri, globalization was a term invented by North American intellectuals to hide from the world the U.S.’s “economic policies of incursion into other countries. It serves to make respectable the movement of speculative capital, a movement which always causes grave problems” (Carreto, 1997). During the early 21st century crises of capitalism, the guidebook to U.S. transnational corporations – the Standard and Poor’s index – documented a remarkable fact. While unemployment skyrocketed in the U.S., American-based TNCs actually increased their profits significantly. Where did the money come from, asked the economics writer Harold Meyerson? From overseas – meaning places like Brazil, from where the top U.S. firms increased the share of returns on investments from 32 to 48 percent of their portfolio between 2000 and 2010 (Meyerson, 2012). The recent leftist Occupy and right-wing Tea Party movement in the U.S. criticize the bailout of Wall Street by the administrations of both Republican (George W. Bush) and Democratic (Barack Obama) presidents, seemingly adding weight to the important role of nation-states in “the coming of Empire.” Marx and Engels wrote of these tendencies back in 1847 when describing in their *Communist Manifesto* the success of the bourgeoisie in establishing its political sovereignty over “modern representative government” and forcing “all nations, under threat of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production.” Indeed, the absence of anti-imperialist rhetoric in the 2012 peasant congress is one of the striking differences between the past and the present. The enemy of working people has infused all corners of the earth, just as Marx and Engels predicted, but there is little reason to doubt continuity in the central role of the United States in designing and facilitating this process to preserve its hegemony, especially in the Americas and especially since the country’s “rise to globalism” in World War II (Ambrose, 1971).

Rather than colonization or neo-colonization, today’s land grabbing seems to represent not a new phenomena but another chapter in an on-going process of capitalist accumulation and power concentration by the bourgeoisie on an international scale. With Brazilian TNCs like JBS buying up big U.S. TNCs like Swift, the imperialist paradigm predominant from the 16th century to the 20th, does not

fully explain reality. The historical analysis used in this paper demonstrated significant parallels between the waning moment of the imperialist age and this new round of enclosure (Borras et al, 2012; Alden Wily, 2012). Significant indeed were the large-scale foreign land acquisitions in 1950s and 1960s Brazil, but the buyers were limited to those approved by the bi-polar world order the U.S. then required to bolster its power. Today, the international financial architecture built up during the Cold War, seems to have created a network of common interests and methods that has diversified the national portfolio of the bourgeoisie and enhanced its power to dictate agendas to nation-states, even that of the United States in Latin America.

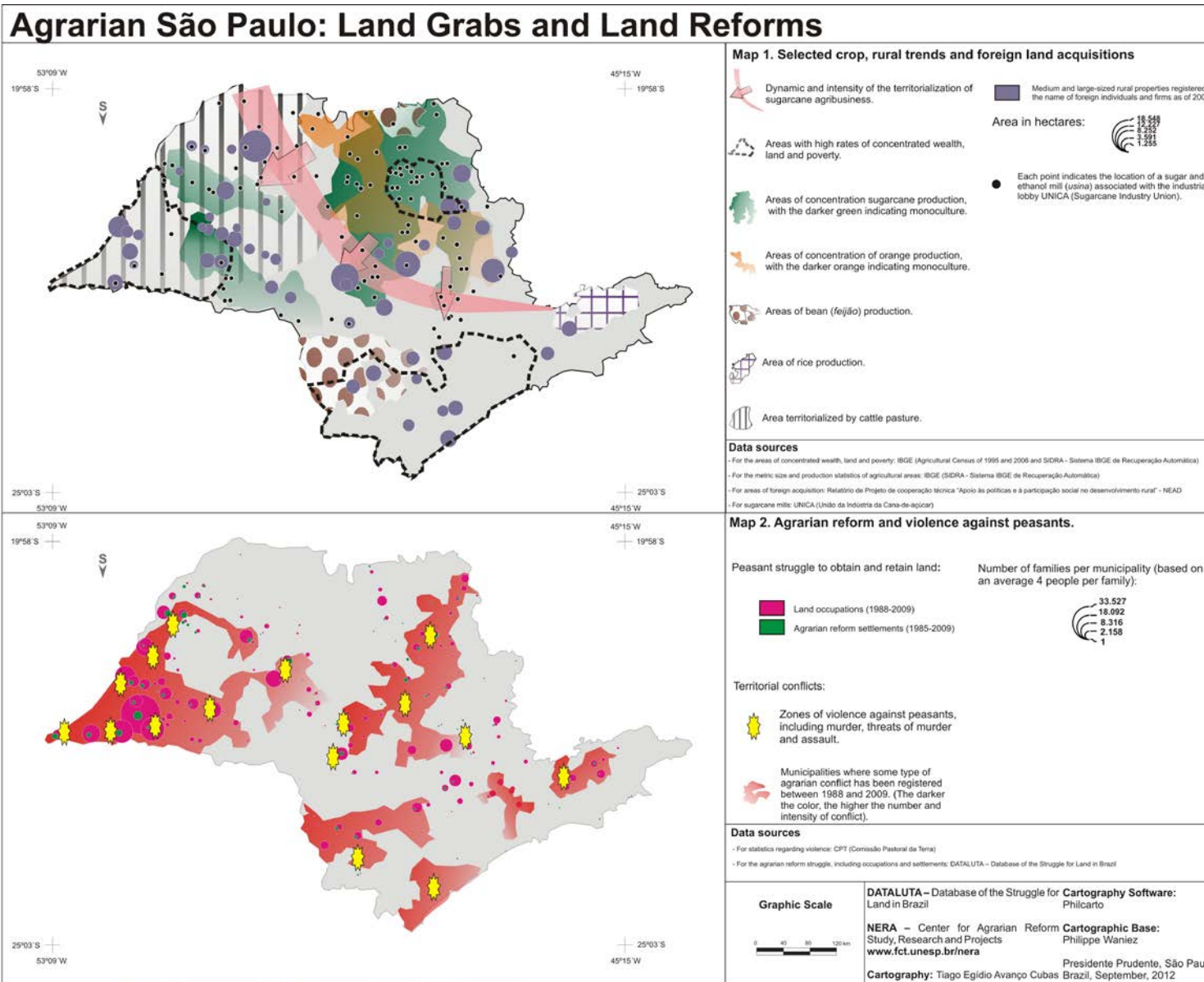


Table 1: Medium to large sized properties purchased by foreigners
in the state of São Paulo and registered by INCRA.
Arranged by location, area and number of properties.

Municipality	Area (hectares)	No. of properties
Agudos	14,737.0	9
Altinópolis	6,107.5	6
Araçoiaba da Serra	4,691.6	5
Arco	1,412.1	1
Auriflama	1,674.3	1
Avaré	2,490.9	4
Boa Esperança do Sul	1,572.0	1
Bocaina	2,206.0	2
Borebi	2,622.3	1
Botucatu	5,296.5	33
Brotas	12,227.4	7
Buri	4,557.3	10
Caiuá	2,868.0	2
Campos Novos Paulista	3,298.4	1
Casa Branca	4,233.3	4
Eldorado	2,722.2	10
Espírito Santo do Pinhal	2,624.3	4
Guararapes	6,040.2	6
Iacri	3,591.0	12
Iguape	5,484.0	24
Inúbia Paulista	1,422.4	1
Itapetininga	3,529.9	5
Itapeva	3,766.5	6
Juquiá	2,320.5	14
Magda	18,548.6	2
Marabá Paulista	4,948.0	6
Marília	2,406.3	14
Miracatu	4,110.4	14
Mirante do Paranapanema	1,372.9	1
Mogi das Cruzes	3,374.7	72
Mogi Guaçu	10,441.8	12
Murutinga do Sul	1,255.6	1
Oriente	1,362.4	1
Oswaldo Cruz	2,295.9	4
Penápolis	1,255.3	1
Pereira Barreto	2,185.2	12
Presidente Epitácio	8,252.1	10
Presidente Venceslau	2,119.2	8
Quatá	3,806.2	11
Quintana	2,103.3	7

Rancharia	4,197.3	14
Salmourão	1,528.0	1
Santa Rita do Passa Quatro	3,884.2	4
Santa Rosa de Viterbo	3,369.4	4
São Carlos	2,347.0	10
São José dos Campos	4,451.7	18
São Miguel Arcanjo	2,120.7	9
São Pedro do Turvo	2,584.2	13
São Simão	5,939.1	3
Sud Mennucci	1,474.3	1
Teodoro Sampaio	4,423.6	4
Tupã	4,691.8	19
TOTAL	212,344.7	445

Source: Relatório NEAD, Pretto (2009).

Table 2: Sugar and ethanol mills in the state of São Paulo and associated with the industry's lobbying group, UNICA. Arranged by location and quantity.

Municipality	Number of mills
Pitangueiras	4
Sertãozinho	4
Araraquara	2
Araras	2
Ariranha	2
Barra Bonita	2
Batatais	2
Catanduva	2
Jaboticabal	2
Morro Agudo	2
Paraguaçu Paulista	2
Pontal	2
Tarumã	2
Américo Brasiliense	1
Andradina	1
Araçatuba	1
Avaré	1
Bariri	1
Bento de Abreu	1
Boituva	1
Brejo Alegre	1
Brotas	1
Buritama	1
Buritizal	1
Capivari	1
Castilho	1

Cerqueira César	1
Cerquilha	1
Colina	1
Colômbia	1
Cosmópolis	1
Descalvado	1
Elias Fausto	1
General Salgado	1
Guaíra	1
Guaraci	1
Guariba	1
Iacanga	1
Ibaté	1
Igarapava	1
Ipaussu	1
Iracemápolis	1
Itapira	1
Itápolis	1
Jardinópolis	1
Jaú	1
José Bonifácio	1
Junqueirópolis	1
Leme	1
Lençóis Paulista	1
Macatuba	1
Maracá	1
Meridiano	1
Mirandópolis	1
Mirante do Paranapanema	1
Mococa	1
Monções	1
Narandiba	1
Nova Independência	1
Novo Horizonte	1
Olímpia	1
Orindiúva	1
Ourinhos	1
Ouroeste	1
Palestina	1
Pereira Barreto	1
Piracicaba	1
Pirassununga	1
Pontes Gestal	1
Potirendaba	1
Pradópolis	1
Promissão	1

Quatá	1
Rafard	1
Rio das Pedras	1
Santa Albertina	1
Santa Bárbara d'Oeste	1
Santa Rosa de Viterbo	1
Santo Antônio do Aracanguá	1
Santo Expedito	1
São Manuel	1
São Paulo	1
Sebastianópolis do Sul	1
Serrana	1
Severínia	1
Sud Mennucci	1
Tanabi	1
Teodoro Sampaio	1
Valparaíso	1
Vista Alegre do Alto	1
TOTAL	107

Source: UNICA, 2012. Org. Tiago Cubas

Figure 1. Profile of total rural land titles (lilac) and areas (purple) in the name of foreign individuals or firms registered by the SNCRas of June 4, 2008, organized by decades (1900-2000). Source: Pretto, *Imoveis rurais*, 2008, p. 22.

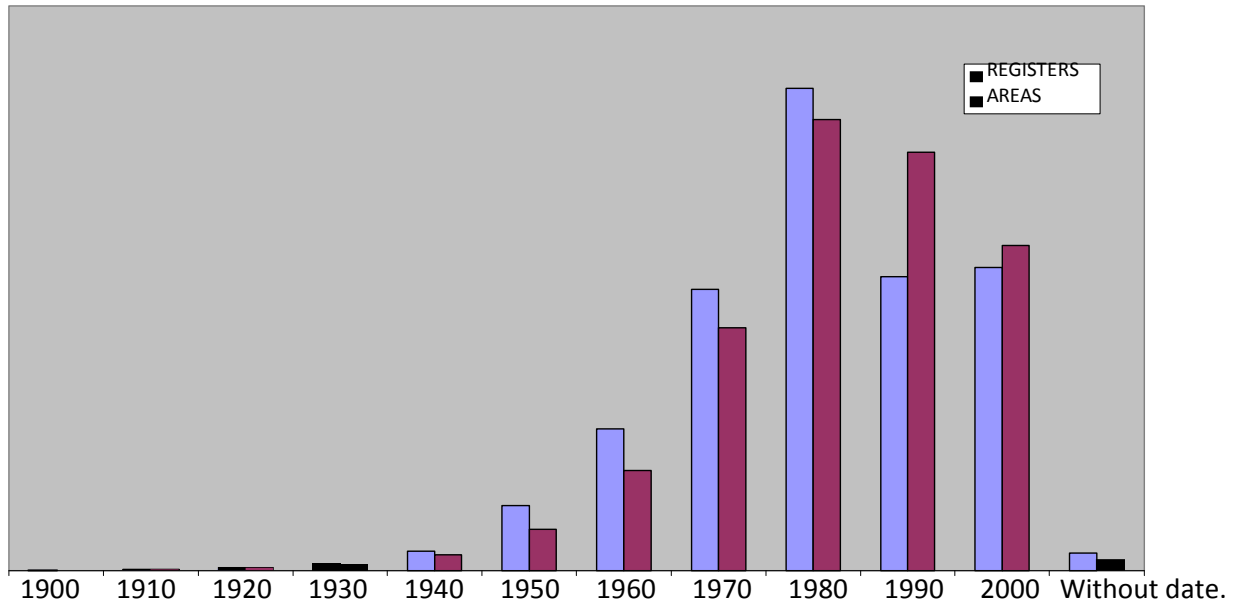


Figure 2. Profile of total medium and large foreign held rural properties in Brazil, by quantity (blue) and area (red), registered in the SNCR as of June 4, 2008, organized by decade of filing (1900-2000). Source: Pretto, *Imoveis rurais*, 2008, p. 23.

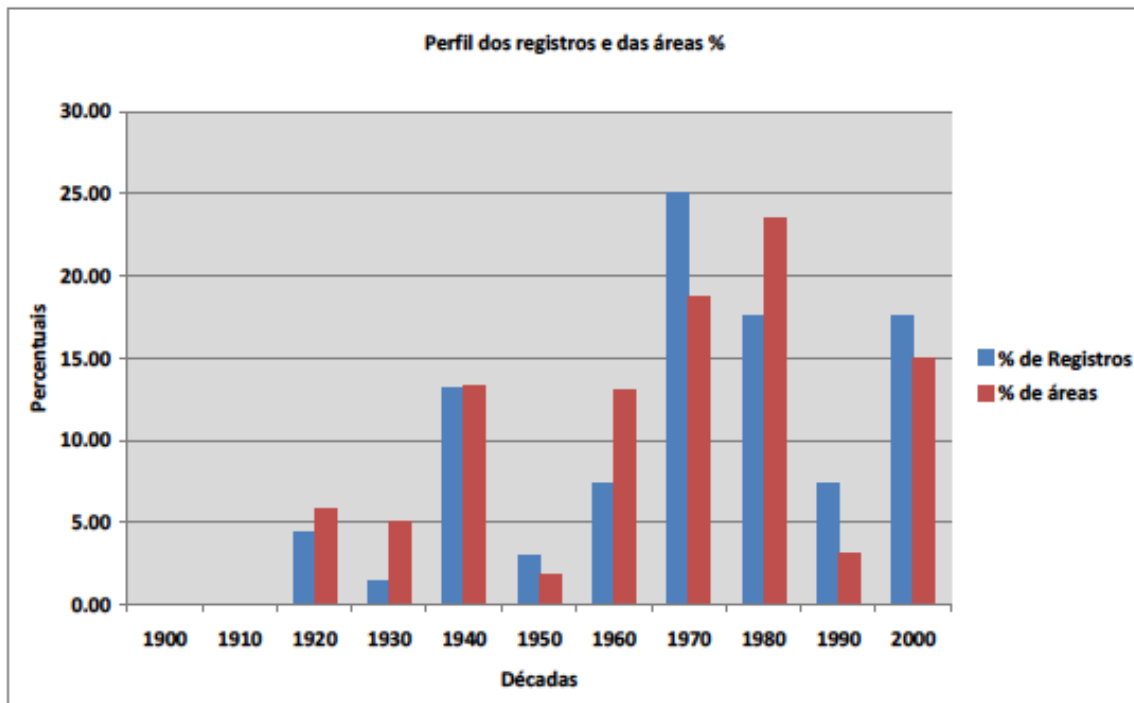


Table 3. Historical trends in land area and productivity in São Paulo state for selected staple food and industrial crops, 1956-2011.

	1959	1969	1976	1986	1996	2006	2011
Selected food crops primarily consumed domestically							
Beans ⁱ							
Area (1000s ha)		234.7	240.7	363.4	143.8	125.8	100.8
Production (1000s of 60 kg sacks)		1,319.5	2,327.4	3,472.5	2,359.5	3,290.0	3,198.8
Rice							
Area (1000s ha)		774.5	620.3	305.1	104.0	26.1	21.4
Production (60 kg sacks)		9,096.4	13,944.4	8,773.4	3,523.8	1,424.6	1,651.0
Wheat							
Area (1000s ha)		ni	ni	211.4	26.6	42.1	53.4
Production (60 kg sacks)		ni	ni	5,494.8	556.1	1,261.6	2,185.6
Selected industrial crops of greater interest to foreign investors							
Eucalyptus							
Total Area (1000s ha)		ni	ni	788.8	713.7	915.8	998.7
New area added (1000s ha)		ni	ni	26.6	25.8	166.1	221.5
Production		ni	ni	ni ⁱⁱ	ni	ni	ni
Oranges							
Area (1000s ha) ⁱⁱⁱ		153.3	410.0	487.8	718.9	574.5	690.0
Production (1000s 40.8 kg boxes)		33,980.1	97,169.8	196,366.2	371,401.6	348,399.6	384,869.9
Sugarcane ^{iv}							
Area cut (1000s ha)		563.4	932.0	1,504.1	2,387.8	3,436.8	5,269.4
New area added (1000s ha)		ni	ni	350.1	428.3	821.6	572.2
Production (1000s of tons)		25,800.0	47,500.0	122,986.1	187,039.7	284,916.7	406,483.6

Sources: Camargo, 1969-1980; IEA, 1983-2011. Organization: C A Welch

ⁱIncludes wet and dry beans (*feijão*).

ⁱⁱNot informed.

ⁱⁱⁱ Due to availability, area figures are for 1975, 1985, 1996 and 2005 (Barbosa, 2007). The 2011 figure is from UNICA, 2011.

^{iv}Reflects sugarcane production for the industrialization of sugar and ethanol and not feed.

Table 4. Relative participation of foreigners recorded by SNCR by June, 2008, organized by land purchase registers and areas purchased, as a percentage of total purchase registers and areas recorded for Brazil, by decade – 1900 to 2008. Pretto, *Moveis rurais*, 2008, p. 21.

BRASIL - Participação relativa de registros e áreas por décadas				
Décadas	%Registros	% Acumulado dos registros	% Áreas	% Acumulado de área
1900	0.012	0.012	0.0004	0.0004
1910	0.047	0.058	0.064	0.065
1920	0.143	0.202	0.170	0.235
1930	0.415	0.617	0.309	0.544
1940	1.207	1.824	0.971	1.514
1950	4.015	5.839	2.551	4.065
1960	8.773	14.612	6.194	10.259
1970	17.421	32.033	15.040	25.298
1980	29.888	61.921	27.940	53.238
1990	18.201	80.122	25.925	79.163
2000	18.783	98.904	20.152	99.315
Sem registro de data	1.096	100.000	0.685	100.000
TOTAIS	100.000		100.000	

Fonte: SNCR/INCRA Apuração Especial 2008.

Table 5. Medium and large properties purchased in Brazil by foreigners and their areas recorded by SNCR by June, 2008, organized by decade as a percentage of total purchase registers and areas recorded – 1900 to 2000. Pretto, *Moveis rurais*, 2008, p. 22.

BRASIL - Registros médias e grandes por décadas							
Décadas	Registros	Áreas	área média no período (ha)	% registros	% acumulado registros	% áreas	% acumulado áreas
1900	1	1000.06	1000.06	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03
1910	1	2103.80	2103.80	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.09
1920	10	6142.69	614.27	0.18	0.21	0.18	0.28
1930	27	9906.19	366.90	0.48	0.69	0.30	0.57
1940	87	32021.40	368.06	1.55	2.24	0.95	1.52
1950	209	75586.66	361.66	3.71	5.95	2.25	3.78
1960	432	199862.10	462.64	7.68	13.63	5.95	9.73
1970	1005	495477.83	493.01	17.86	31.49	14.76	24.48
1980	1550	902067.63	581.98	27.55	59.04	26.87	51.35
1990	1251	917520.91	733.43	22.23	81.27	27.33	78.67
2000	1016	696339.82	685.37	18.06	99.32	20.74	99.41
Sem registro de data	38	19712.60	518.75	0.68	100.00	0.59	100.00
TOTAIS	5627	3357741.70	596.72				

Fonte: SNCR/INCRA, Apuração Especial 2008

Table 6. Recent, large-scale land grabs by foreign investors in Brazil.
Organized by national location of purchaser's headquarters, area and agricultural activity.
Based on January, 2012 data. Source: GRAIN, 2012.

Headquarters Country	Hectares (km ²)	Production
Argentina	455	Cattle, soybeans, sugar cane, oil seeds
Canada	97	Diverse crops
China	400	Soybean, cotton
France	390	Soybean
Germany	250	Cattle, sugar cane
India	133	Sugar cane
Japan	100	Cotton, corn, soybean
New Zealand	0.85	Dairy
Portugal	29.5	Soybean
South Korea	10	Soybean
United Kingdom	165	Sugar cane
United States	1,041	Soybean, sugar cane, rice
Totals		
12	3,071.35	

Organization: C A Welch

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A convergence of factors has been driving a revaluation of land by powerful economic and political actors. This is occurring across the world, but especially in the global South. As a result, we see unfolding worldwide a dramatic rise in the extent of cross-border, transnational corporation-driven and, in some cases, foreign government-driven, large-scale land deals. The phrase 'global land grab' has become a catch-all phrase to describe this explosion of (trans)national commercial land transactions revolving around the production and sale of food and biofuels, conservation and mining activities.

The Land Deal Politics Initiative launched in 2010 as an 'engaged research' initiative, taking the side of the rural poor, but based on solid evidence and detailed, field-based research. The LDPI promotes in-depth and systematic enquiry to inform deeper, meaningful and productive debates about the global trends and local manifestations. The LDPI aims for a broad framework encompassing the political economy, political ecology and political sociology of land deals centred on food, biofuels, minerals and conservation. Working within the broad analytical lenses of these three fields, the LDPI uses as a general framework the four key questions in agrarian political economy: (i) who owns what? (ii) who does what? (iii) who gets what? and (iv) what do they do with the surplus wealth created? Two additional key questions highlight political dynamics between groups and social classes: 'what do they do to each other?', and 'how do changes in politics get shaped by dynamic ecologies, and vice versa?' The LDPI network explores a range of big picture questions through detailed in-depth case studies in several sites globally, focusing on the politics of land deals.

Land Reforms and Land Grabs: Contemporary Conflicts in the Brazilian Land Struggle

While land reform and land grabbing are two distinct phenomena, there has long been a dynamic relationship between them in the history of the Brazilian land struggle. As a policy aimed at "reforming" agricultural land use practices, land reform has served to facilitate land grabbing. Land grabbing, on the other hand, has motivated movements in favor of land reform. This paper explores this dynamic principally in São Paulo state in the Cold War era and the Globalization era. It uses documents, reportage, oral history, and secondary literature to examine change and continuity between events and discourses from 1961 to 2012.



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